

was of minor importance as compared with the financial stability of the State which could only be secured by the appointment of officers on moderate salaries. The Member concurred with other speakers in their opinion that public service absorbed a major portion of the wealth of the State in the shape of high salaries to officials. He said that there were several unnecessary posts in the service. He was in accord with Mr. Nayanar's view that certain appointments referred to by him in his speech on "Retrenchments in the Public Service" as worthy of abolition might be well be dispensed with. (The excessive expenditure on the public service was attributed by the Member to the recruitment of foreigners in large numbers. If the administration of Travancore was carried on through the agency of her own sons who would work with a spirit of enthusiasm and patriotism on a lower pay than foreigners, the material advancement of the country could be achieved easily. The Member suggested the desirability of issuing a Proclamation or a G. O. to the effect that no non-Travancorean would be appointed in the State service.

The Member next proceeded to discuss the qualifications requisite for admission to the public service. He considered that graduates were not necessary for the posts of Police Inspector, Excise Inspector, etc., and that those who passed out of the Pleaders Examination with a little physical training would discharge the duties appertaining to such offices better than graduates. The salaries attached to those offices could also be reduced to a considerable extent in that case.

The Member next dealt at great length with the disabilities of qualified Mahomedans in the matter of securing berths in the public service in spite of the G. O. enjoining that preferential treatment should be given to them in that respect. Several Mahomedan young men who had passed the English School Leaving Certificate Examination were without employment. Heads of departments, just with a view to satisfy the community, appointed a few of them in very short vacancies, but left them out of account when long vacancies turned up. The Member observed that there were only 2 or 3 Mahomedan graduates in the public service and that it was a grievance to the community that they were not in any way encouraged. He prayed that the Government might pay particular attention to that matter and remove their grievance. Regarding the G. O. according preferential treatment, the Member's prayer was that stringent instructions might be issued to all heads of departments to act up to it. The number of Mahomedans recruited in the executive and ministerial ranks was very small, especially after the above G. O. came into existence.

Regarding promotions the Member remarked that the Mahomedan employees of the Sanitary and Excise Departments and the Mahomedan graduate clerks of the Secretariat were not given their legitimate promotions at the time of the reorganisation. The Excise Commissioner thought that a certain Mahomedan employee could not be given promotion on the score of his obesity. The Member regretted that even the legitimate claims of Muslims were overlooked, not to speak of preferential treatment.

It was represented that some heads of departments had led Government to believe that Mahomedans were unfit for work. Muslims were as efficient as the members of other communities, if not more, and it was the G. O. enjoining preferential treatment that led to such a false allegation. When a Mahomedan had a claim for promotion and the head of the department wished to favour a non-Mahomedan, the former was considered lazy, useless and uncouth. As a consequence, the Mahomedan employees in the several departments of the State found themselves in a helpless condition. The Member concluded with a prayer that, in the matter of Mahomedan officials, Government should scrutinise the records connected with them and then decide each question on its merits instead of blindly believing what the departmental head had got to say.

158. Appointment of a Committee to investigate and report on corruption in the public service.

Mr. K. Krishna Panikkan (Member, Nominated) spoke about the prevalence of bribery among Government servants. Cases of bribery were extremely difficult to prove as the Penal Code declared the giving of a bribe to be as much an offence as

the taking of it. That was a great hardship to the people; and the Member requested that the Government might find some remedy for that hardship. By corruption the Member said he did not mean bribery alone. He would apply the expression to all kinds of official irregularity. Such irregularities were most in evidence in the Excise Department. While on that topic the Member thanked the Government for their intention to put down the drink evil by lowering the strength of liquor and reducing the number of shops, as also for their intention to ask the Excise Commissioner to prepare a scheme with a view to eradicating the evil altogether, as announced in the Dewan's Address.

But, strict as were the rules against the overdilution of liquor and for all shops being provided with the means of testing its strength, they were more honored in the breach than in the observance. Similarly, the number of shops was on paper reduced to 1,430; and according to the Government statistics there were only 31 shops in the Kartikapalli taluk. But the Member knew that there were 100 unlicensed shops in that taluk alone. He was sure that not a single shop was being run in accordance with the rules issued by the Government. The Member thought that the Government themselves knew how the excise staff at Vaikam were realising an illicit fee from tappers at the rate of Rs. 1½ per head. Further, they were receiving over Rs. 15 from each of the unlicensed shops. Illicit tapping and distillation were going on with the full knowledge of the Excise subordinates in return for substantial consideration; and 'Onam' presents from tappers and shop-keepers formed a well-recognised perquisite to those subordinates.

The Member next referred to the Judicial Department. He thought that, though the higher officers in that department were free from corruption, the men in the subordinate ranks were hopelessly corrupt. From the attestation of affidavits and the misappropriation of excess sheets of stamp paper from the clients several clerks were making a higher income than that of Munsiffs. Nazirs, amins and process peons also made money by illegal means. Some even went so far as to demand illegal gratification for giving previous intimation to judgment debtors about the issue of warrants for their arrest.

The Member finally said that most of the other departments of the State were hardly better in that matter and requested the Government to appoint a Committee to enquire into and report on the question.

Dewan's reply.—The question of public service has been handled by as many as eight members of the Assembly. I do not propose to give a reply to every point touched upon by every member. I will broadly classify the representations that have been made under these heads, *viz.* (1) employment of foreigners and of a foreign Dewan; (2) recruitment without regard to communal representation, efficiency, and so on; and (3) corruption in the public service, and the indifference and inefficiency of the members of the public service. These are the three main heads under which I classify the several remarks. Very many suggestions have been made and very many grievances have been stated, though no particular instances have been cited.

As for the employment of foreigners, I am afraid a good deal of breath has been wasted. A resolution was brought before the Legislative Council not very long ago and the resolution was withdrawn after the Legislative Council was satisfied that the present policy of Government was to employ Travancoreans except under every exceptional circumstances. The claims of those already in the service cannot, however, be ignored, whether they are Travancoreans or non-Travancoreans. I think it would be as bad in the interests of the service to ignore the claims of people who are already in the service and who have established claims for preferment and promotion as it would be to unduly and unnecessarily take in foreigners into the Travancore Government service. In regard to the question of a foreign Dewan, it is a matter which is very delicate, seeing that I am myself a foreign Dewan. It is a question of high politics. It is not within my province to discuss or deal with the reasons which decide the selection of the Dewan.

As for recruitment, you will yourself notice that various considerations are urged in connection with it. There is, on the one hand, communal representation,

on the other hand efficiency, and on the third, there is the question of age and examination. There is no royal road to the decision of the question of recruitment to the public service. As I have said before, I do not think that any Government has satisfactorily solved this question of recruitment yet. It is a question which is constantly in my thoughts, but it is a question the solution of which is very difficult.

Then in regard to corruption, laziness, and unsatisfactory work, it will be idle to deny that there is corruption or to say that there are no lazy or indifferent officers. Some members denounced the service in unmeasured terms, while others were moderate. It is very easy to denounce. But what are the remedies suggested? One gentleman, I think it was Mr. P. K. Joseph, suggested peculiar remedies, which reminds me of the method advocated by Kautilya in his *Arthashastra*, namely, that the State should employ detectives to detect corruption in the public service. I cannot think of a surer way of promoting false and unjust complaints against public officials than the employment of detectives. Until people themselves are bold enough to come forward and denounce bad officials, Government and the high officers of Government can do very little to put down corruption. I have known in more backward tracts in the Madras Presidencies hundreds of people coming forward to denounce bad officials. This is not a backward country; this is not a country where people are afraid of coming forward and speaking out openly their grievances. Until the people cooperate with Government by giving specific instances and affording proof, it is not possible for Government to put down corruption. If such proof is forthcoming, Government will not be lagging behind to put down corruption, by instituting judicial enquiries and severely punishing those proved at those enquiries to be corrupt. The only safe way of deciding whether there has been corruption or not is to hold a proper enquiry. Even a criminal is entitled to a fair trial. No officer can be convicted of corruption or any other serious charge without a proper enquiry. I do not think Government is helped very much by vague statements, couched in very strong language, of corruption, inefficiency, and so on.

159. The Government and the governed.

Mr. P. C. Kesava Pillai (Member, Vilavankod Taluk) first deplored the wrangle exhibited at the Assembly among members from the different communities for Government appointments and said that it detracted from the prestige and dignity of the Assembly. He dwelt upon the vagaries of heads of departments in the treatment accorded to their subordinates and cited, as an instance, how *Mr. C. E. Kesava Pillai, B. A.*, who was Assistant Excise Commissioner was compulsorily retired on the strength of certain false charges preferred against him by the Excise Commissioner. He also asserted that on enquiry it was found that *Mr. Kesava Pillai* was in the right.

Dewan.—You should ascertain facts definitely before making a statement. You are making a defamatory statement against a responsible officer. I should like to know whether you make yourself responsible for your statement.

Member.—I withdraw my statement.

The Member then said that another officer, *Mr. G. V. Subrahmanya Aiyar*, who was dismissed from the Cochin Service, was entertained in the Department of Public Works, Travancore. That officer was not above board. When he was in Kuzhitturai he misappropriated certain iron girders and other bridge materials. Though the Chief Engineer reported against him, he was transferred from his department and entertained in the Maramat Department.

Dewan.—You are again making defamatory statements without holding yourself responsible for them.

Member.—If my statements are not correct, I withdraw them.

The Member then spoke about corruption generally and was of opinion that the only remedy against it was the deletion from the Penal Code of Sections 153 to 156 dealing with illegal gratification.